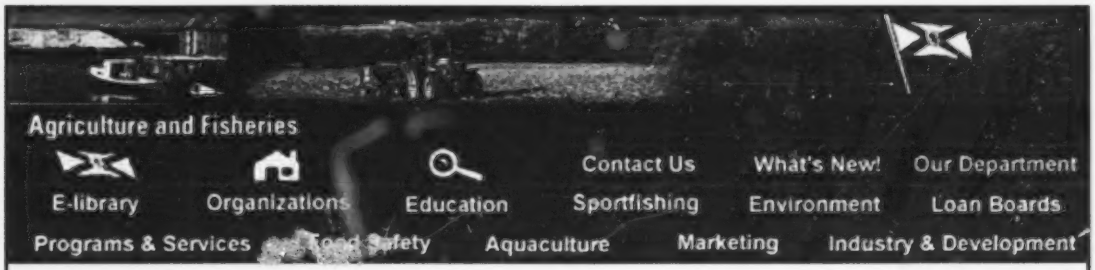

Business Plan 2000–01
for the former Department of Agriculture and Marketing
Released: April 11, 2000

Table of Contents:

- Planning Context
- Mission Statement
- Strategic Goals
- Core Business Functions
- Priorities and Linkages: 2000–01
- Budget Context
- Communications
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Financial Services

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1. Planning Context

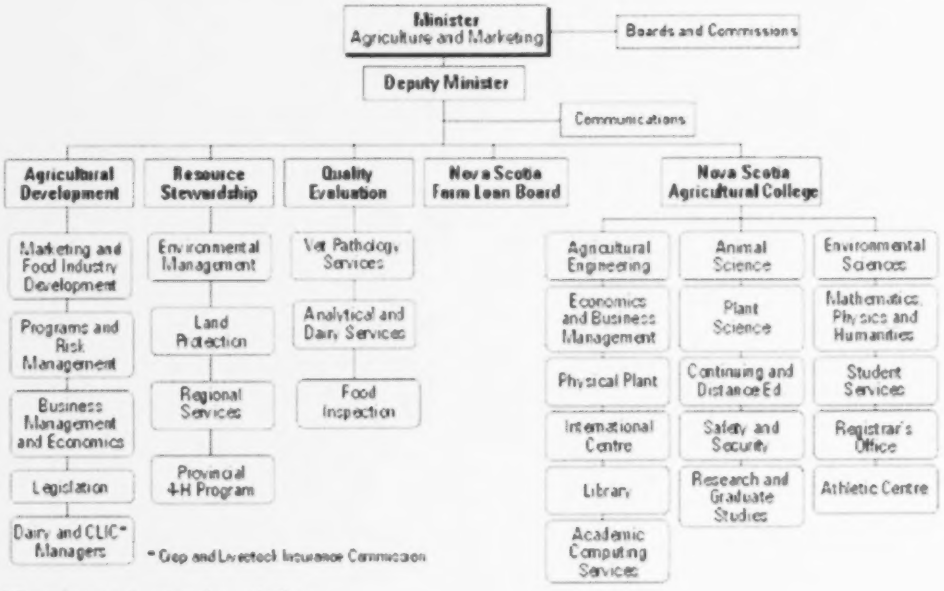
1.1 Introduction
The Department of Agriculture and Marketing has been serving its clients since 1885 when the provincial government replaced the Central Board of Agriculture (established in 1789) with a Department of Agriculture. The department's current structure consists of five organizational divisions: Agricultural Development, Resource Stewardship, Quality Evaluation, the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board and the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC).

The NSAC, as part of government, is a unique institution that supports, delivers and enhances the department's goals and priorities, particularly in the areas of education and research, which are key to the future of the industry. The NSAC generates $10 million in revenues through tuition and other means, that supports its programs.

The department also provides administrative and support services to various boards and commissions in addition to the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board, including the Crop and Livestock Insurance and Dairy commissions.

The department's 2000/2001 budget is $ 33.5 million, of which $4.9 million is budgeted for NSAC. The department has five regional"centres" that support department work in the field, including closely working with clients. Of the department's total staff complement of 447, NSAC accounts for 268.

Administrative Organization -



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1.2 Challenges

The province's agriculture and food industry has changed a great deal in the last decade. For the department, this has been a challenging time; much discussion and consultation has taken place over its role and the services it should provide to clients to effectively grow the industry by capitalizing on opportunities and mitigating challenges in order to increase competitiveness.

The department is a key component in the support and development of the Nova Scotia's Other Economy - sustainability and growth in rural areas.

The department supports industry growth through extension services and research/technology transfer programs offered by department staff — who are considered its greatest resource — as well as through development grant programs and loans, which are considered key to increasing competitiveness.

In recent years of fiscal restraint, the department has been able to redirect resources and create the necessary efficiencies and partnerships with the private sector and industry organizations to continue these essential services and programs. The department is continuing to support industry growth and competitiveness by addressing the following challenges in 1999/2000:

- Provision of information to producers on the Canada/Nova Scotia Agricultural Income Disaster (AIDA) Program, and modelling of provincial credits for disaster assistance already provided by Nova Scotia.
- Implementation of a five-year relief package for weather-related losses;
- Introduction of a New Entrants' Program to attract and support new farmers and,

- Negotiation of a new federal/provincial safety nets agreement, requiring 40 per cent provincial funding;
- Review of development programs and the industry expectation of increased funding in the next round of farm development programs;
- Year 2000 compliancy;
- Occupational Health and Safety compliancy;
- The need to capitalize on opportunities for economic growth in the agriculture sector, including: new crop and livestock investmentsand partnerships with the private sector and industry organizations to continue these essential services and programs. The department is continuing to support industry growth and competitiveness by addressing the following challenges in 1999/2000:

2. Mission Statement

The Department's mission is to encourage the development of a viable and sustainable agriculture and food industry for the betterment of Nova Scotians.

3. Goals

1. Encourage the competitiveness of the agriculture and food industry so that new employment and income opportunities are created.
2. Provide leadership in the development of human resources for agriculture, food and rural communities.
3. Foster a sustainable and environmentally responsible agriculture and food industry.

4. Core Business Functions

Industry/farm development programs, income stabilization (safety net) programs, crop insurance, market and product research and development, regional agricultural development services, food safety education and inspection services, agricultural-focused financial lending and planning, applied production and environmental research, provincial 4-H program, agricultural-related degree-granting programs and continuing education courses, provincial dykeland system, environmental farm management programs, lab services, animal welfare and disease prevention.

5. Priorities 2000-2001

Goal 1: Encourage the competitiveness of the agriculture and food industry so that new employment and income opportunities are created.

- Develop and implement a package of long-term, flexible programs for the agricultural industry to support economic sustainability and promote growth. Such programs will:
  - be developed through a strengthened partnership with the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture and cost-shared where possible with the federal government;
  - meet the diverse developmental and risk management needs of farmers, industry groups and agri-business;
  - build upon federal-provincial income stabilization (safety net) programs.

Linkages: NS Federation of Agriculture, Producers, Commodity Groups, Agri-Food Businesses, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

- Insist that the federal government provide drought assistance to Nova Scotia farmers in accordance with their needs.
- Develop a water infrastructure strategy to help farmers proactively deal with future drought conditions and water shortages, support long-term planning and lessen weather-related impacts on farm income.

Linkages: NS Federation of Agriculture, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Environment, Housing and Municipal Affairs, NS Agricultural College

- Develop a consumer awareness program through the province's quality-based Taste of Nova Scotia Program for local food products that is consistent with the provincial "Buy Nova Scotia First" initiative.

Linkages: Taste of Nova Scotia, Commodity Groups, Agri-Food Businesses, Economic Development, Tourism, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

- Maintain the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board as a separate entity to address the unique needs of Nova Scotia farmers to have access to capital, particularly for new ventures, and to stimulate growth and job creation in the rural economy.

Linkages: NS Federation of Agriculture, Farm Credit Corp., Private Lenders

- Identify and develop marketing opportunities for Nova Scotia food products, services and technologies in domestic and priority international areas with specific emphasis on horticulture, organics, value-added and direct market products.

Linkages: NS Agricultural College, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Commodity Groups, Food Processors, NS 4-H Council

- Initiate a marketing enhancement program for Nova Scotia agriculture and food industry groups designed to strengthen and coordinate their marketing capacity, and provide support for Nova Scotia products in local and international markets.

Linkages: NS Agricultural College, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Commodity Groups, Food Processors

- Establish a New Entrants Program to continue the tradition of family farming in Nova Scotia and encourage continued growth of the rural economy through an infusion of new farmers and new ideas.

Linkages: Commodity Groups, NS Agricultural College, NS Farm Management Institute, Environment, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

- Facilitate a series of policy forums to stimulate debate and create understanding of agricultural issues.

Linkages: NS Farm Management Institute, NS Federation of Agriculture, NS Agricultural College

- Increase federal and private sector participation in research at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in order to create new knowledge and technologies to support Nova Scotia agriculture, aquaculture and rural communities.

Linkages: Dalhousie University, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Commodity Groups, Food Processors, NS Farm Management Institute, NS Federation of Agriculture

Goal 2: Provide leadership in the development of human resources for agriculture, food and rural communities.

- Provide specialized skills training and educational opportunities for youth in rural communities through the provincial 4-H program.

Linkage: NS 4-H Council, Canadian 4-H Council

- Expand the current pilot project for agricultural-based high school curriculum to include schools province-wide by working with the Department of Education.

Linkages: Education and Culture, NS Federation of Agriculture, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

- Establish new educational programs at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) in line with current issues facing rural Nova Scotians, including food quality assurance, organic agriculture and rural resource management
- Increasing international enrollment at the NSAC by recruiting in New England and Iceland, and by participating in international development and student exchange projects.
- Increase the training of highly qualified agricultural personnel by increasing enrollment in the joint NSAC/Dalhousie M Sc program.
- Increase federal and private sector funding of international projects in order to provide programs with a global orientation for the benefit of NSAC's students and graduates, and the industries they serve.
- Seek increased and stable support from the other Atlantic provinces for NSAC's agricultural technical programs.
- Utilize new educational technology to deliver NSAC programs throughout Nova Scotia and beyond.

Linkages: Dalhousie University, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Commodity Groups, Food Processors, NS Farm Management Institute, NS Federation of Agriculture

Goal 3: Foster an environmentally responsible and sustainable agriculture and food

industry.

- Implement a Farm Practices Act that balances the needs of farmers and their non-farming neighbours and encourages sustainable resource management and future growth.

  Linkages: NS Federation of Agriculture, Environment, Housing and Municipal Affairs

- Maintain livestock health services assistance for farm animals and reinstate the veterinary fee subsidy for large farm animals, to ensure the viability of veterinary farm services and a healthy farm industry across the province.

  Linkages: Veterinarians, Producers, Livestock Health Services Boards

- Develop an agricultural land policy, in consultation with rural communities, to protect and sustain the province's valuable natural resources.

  Linkages: NS Federation of Agriculture, Environment, Natural Resources, Housing and Municipal Affairs

- Assist farmers in the continued adoption of sustainable farming practices through the Nova Scotia Environmental Farm Plan program and the adoption of sustainable farming technology.

  Linkage: NS Federation of Agriculture

- Amend and consolidate existing food safety and meat inspection regulations to provide a single common public health protection standard across the province, enhancing food safety and contributing to a healthy Nova Scotia.

  Linkages: Health, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Food processors and Retailers

- Develop a provincial program for disease surveillance to protect the industry and support market development.

  Linkages: Health, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Food Retailers

- Complete the implementation of a Laboratory Information Management System to improve laboratory service to industry and the public.

  Linkages: Commodity Groups, Environment

6. Budget Context

Budget allocations for major program areas (2000-2001)

Branch/Division	2000-2001 ($000)
Senior Management	1,056
Agricultural Development	14,275
Resource Stewardship	2,208
Quality Evaluation Services	4,064
Boards and Commissions	6,980
Nova Scotia Agricultural College	4,902
Total Net Current Account Expenditures	**33,485**

A description of these major program areas is as follows:

Agricultural Development
Provides advice and direction in developing policy and programs that support and encourage development and create an environment of growth for agri-business in Nova Scotia. Administers the departments development programs and safety net agreements. The staff and core services of the Marketing and Food Industry Development Branch have been consolidated here to address industry development needs in a co-ordinated and focused manner. Staff also work with other provincial agencies, the federal government, non-government agencies and organizations, and other stakeholders in the agriculture and food industries to develop programs and co-ordinate information.

Resource Stewardship
Supports the development of a viable and sustainable provincial agriculture and food industry by providing regional support services and encouraging sustainable resource and farm management practices. Staff are also responsible for land protection, maintenance of provincial dykeland structures and administration of the provincial 4-H program.

Quality Evaluation Services
Provides leadership in the production and distribution of food through consultations, regulations and analytical and quality evaluation services. Consolidates laboratory and analytical services and food inspection services.

Boards and Commissions
Provides funds for the administration and delivery of services provided by the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board, and the Nova Scotia Crop and Livestock Commission and the Nova Scotia Dairy Commission.

Nova Scotia Agricultural College
Provides for the administration and delivery of all College programs, including classroom, research and laboratory course instruction, residence accommodations, dining hall services, athletic programs, and reading and resource materials for students.

7. Communications

The following departmental messages will be targeted to the following audiences: Nova Scotia's agriculture and agri-food industry, the general public, media, department staff, the

Nova Scotia Agricultural College, other provincial government departments, the federal, provincial and municipal governments, the education system, retailers, and environmental groups.

The department's key messages for 2000/2001 are as follows:

- Nova Scotia's agriculture and agri-food industry holds a great deal of economic potential. The department has a two-pronged approach to help it meet that potential: stabilize the industry in the face of growing challenges, like drought; and support and enhance its ability to compete in a global marketplace through development that directly impact growth and job creation.
- Agriculture is the foundation of our rural communities. By growing and diversifying agriculture, we will renew, revitalize and ultimately sustain Nova Scotia's rural lifestyle.
- Securing the future of the province's agriculture industry is a top priority. We are committed to developing initiatives that maintain and increase the number of farmers in Nova Scotia. We are also committed to working in partnership with industry and community groups, and other levels of government to ensure the industry has the natural resources (land, water) to flourish, while meeting the needs of other rural stakeholders.
- Education is key to the future prosperity of Nova Scotia agriculture. We are fortunate to have the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in the province, which places a premium on curriculum that addresses industry needs, and offers continuing education courses to support life-long learning.
- Nova Scotia and Canada have one of the safest food systems in the world. We produce high quality, nutritious food that consumers can be proud of and have confidence in.
- The Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Marketing has a good relationship with the industry. This relationship has served the industry well in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Working together toward the common goal of growing and diversifying the industry is the key.

8. Human Resources

Human Resources priorities for 2000/2001 are:

- Corporate consultative advice and assistance to the Department with regard to its strategic initiatives, restructuring efforts, organizational design and labor relations issues.
- Guidance and support to Departmental Managers in Human Resource Planning, enhancing the Department's ability to meet goals and future challenges.
- Support of the Corporate Integrated Management Development initiative by coordinating the Succession Planning and Performance Management processes within the Department. This includes providing ongoing consultative support to managers as well as analytical and planning support to the Department throughout the process. Career planning will be provided in conjunction with this initiative.
- Quality, cost effective training and development opportunities and human resources programs customized to meet identified needs within the Department.
- Efficient personnel, payroll and benefit administration services for all employees.
- Streamlining of the Disability Case Management process and continuing the provision of related consultative and support services leading to improved employee morale and productivity.
- Advice and assistance regarding Occupational Health and Safety Program changes which ensure compliance with related legislation and the provision of a safe and healthy workplace.

- Assistance to Managers in their Occupational Health and Safety Audit preparation by leading audit readiness exercises and follow up in their sections.

9. Information Technology

Information Technology priorities for 2000/2001 are:

- Operational support for business systems, desktops and networks, including telephone support through the CSU Help Desk, fixing system faults, providing enhancements, monitoring network and server data backups.
- Operational planning for IT systems, including hardware capacity planning, network capacity and data connectivity planning, system component specification planning and implementation scheduling.
- Resources to assist the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board in providing an integrated loans management system which will meet their needs. A commitment in the Government's Blue Book agenda is to "Maintain the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board as a separate entity."
- Resources to work with the Agricultural Development Division on a cost shared basis to upgrade the Farm Registration system. A new application form and potential refund status changes, currently being worked on, are required to be part of a new system.
- Prioritization of departmental IT initiatives. During 1999, the Year 2000 issue was identified as the number-one priority. Beginning in 2000, the Information Technology Division will be working with departmental and college staff to prioritize initiatives and to convey those initiatives to senior management of the department. The prioritization will be connected to the business plans for the department, and IT plans for Budget Year 2000-2001 will be aligned with the departmental business plans.

10. Financial Services

Financial Services priorities for 2000/2001 include the implementation of government wide initiatives, as well as several department projects. Government wide initiatives that are also department priorities include:

- Implementation of Tangible Capital Asset Policy that will modify the manner in which government accounts for tangible capital assets. The accounting portion of this policy will be implemented through the asset management module of SAP.
- Development and implementation of a policy for the use of debit and credit cards in government offices that provide goods and services to the public. This initiative will improve the ease with which the public can access and purchase government goods and services.
- Continuing to improve the reporting capability of the provincial Central Financial Management System. Improvements to existing financial reports and the creation of new ones will improve the financial information available to civil servants.
- Supporting role in the "Buy Nova Scotia First Program" by ensuring government tendering policies (practised by the Resource Departments) allow Nova Scotian companies to compete fairly for government business.
- Strengthening fiscal accountability within the resource departments.
- Cutting the cost of government by monitoring and reducing nonessential spending.
- Ensuring that Resource Departments Financial Quarterly information is complete and provides detailed comparative analysis from one quarter to the next.

Department specific priorities of Financial Services include:

- Continuing to improve the integration of the business planning and budget process.
- Examining the structure of the Finance Section, Resources CSU to ensure that staff provides continuous service improvement for our client departments. This is particularly important with government's move towards new procurement practises such as procurement cards, "Buy Nova Scotia First" program and program/service review.

For more information, contact the Agriculture and Fisheries. Last updated: April 23, 2002
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